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THE COMMUNITY FAIR

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The Community Fair Appeals To All

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THE COMMUNITY FAIR is a miniature county fair with the races, side shows, and other commercialized amusements omitted. It calls not only for the exhibition of the best products that have been grown and the best work that has been done in the community, but also for games, athletic contests, pageants, and similar features of recreational or educational value.

The community fair is most effective where the whole community is concerned in its management, though successful fairs, patronized by the greater part of the people of the community, are often held by the Grange, Farmers' Union, or other farmers' organizations.

The first step toward holding a community fair is to interest the leaders of the community; the second is to call a meeting of the whole community to elect officers and appoint committees to have charge of the work. The fair should be well advertised, and effort should be made to secure exhibits from as many persons as possible, rather than to secure exhibits of exceptional quality. For premiums ribbons are usually awarded, rather than cash payments. As most of the preparation for the fair is made by volunteer workers, the small amount of money required for incidental expenses can be raised by subscription or by the sale of advertising space in the catalogue or on the program. There should be no entry fees or admission charge.

The judges should be secured, if possible, from outside the community, and should be given an opportunity to explain their awards to the exhibitors interested. The best exhibits shown at a community fair in many cases have been taken to the county fair as a community exhibit, thus giving opportunity for profitable community rivalry.

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THE COMMUNITY FAIR is a miniature county fair conducted by the people of a community to promote its social and economic life. It arouses interest and pride in local achievement by affording an opportunity for the exhibition of the best products of the community, fosters the spirit of cooperation by bringing the people together in friendly rivalry, and affords an opportunity for wholesome community recreation.

These fairs are held quite generally throughout the country and are known in different localities as community fairs, district fairs, township fairs, school fairs, grange fairs, and farmers' club fairs. The fall festivals, harvest home festivals, and farm, home, and school festivals, which are held in certain localities, are adaptations of the same general idea.

The community, township, or district fair makes its appeal directly to all members of the community, while the fair conducted by the farmers' club appeals especially to the members of the organization concerned.



FIG. 1.—A community fair group.

The school fair in its simplest form is an exhibition of the work done and the products grown by the school children. From the school fair, with its community-wide interest, it is an easy step to include the products of the older girls and boys who are not in school, and ultimately the products and work of all the members of the community.

Other types of community fairs vary from the "harvest home thanksgiving festival" of New England, which was originally dominated by the religious motive and had very few exhibits aside from those brought for decorative purposes, to the "farm, home, and school festivals" of the Middle West, where the main feature is the exhibition of products and where recreation of all kinds forms a prominent part.

ORGANIZATION.

A single organization is seldom influential enough to enlist all the elements in a community for the purpose of conducting a community fair. Every organization in the community ought to feel responsible for the success of the enterprise.

The first step is to get together the leaders of the different organizations in the community for the purpose of considering whether or not it is advisable to hold a community fair. It is well to present at this meeting a general outline of the method of procedure for the conduct of the fair. If the plan is approved by this group, a community meeting is called, at which full explanation is made regarding the nature and purposes of a community fair and the methods of conducting it. This meeting should be well advertised by posters, newspaper notices, and post cards addressed to each family, calling attention to the place and date and emphasizing the importance of the meeting.

The program of this meeting should be so arranged that several short talks precede the general discussion. After the discussion a vote is taken to determine whether or not the community wishes to hold a fair. Experience has shown that best results are obtained where boys and girls above 12 years of age are allowed to vote along with the men and women.

If the community decides to hold a fair, the next step is to form an organization, either temporary or permanent, and elect officers, consisting of a president, a vice-president, and a secretary-treasurer. Committees should also be chosen approximately as follows, making such changes in the list as local conditions may require:

General committees:

Amusement and entertainment.

Arrangements and decorations.

Publicity.

Exhibit department committees:

- Live stock.
- Farm products.
- Orchard and garden products.
- Woman's work and fine arts.
- Historical relics.
- School and club exhibits.

Care should be exercised in choosing officers and committees. It has been found advisable to have the acting chairman appoint a special nominating committee to suggest officers for election and committees for appointment, after due consideration of their general fitness and willingness to serve. If some thought has been given to this matter before the meeting, this committee should be able to report nominations for the officers with little delay, and the committees may be appointed by the president after the meeting has adjourned.

WORK OF OFFICERS AND COMMITTEES.

The president keeps in close touch with the other officers and the chairmen of all the committees and is the correlating force and executive officer of the fair. The other officers perform the duties usually pertaining to their offices. The committees should have from three to five members each, including at least one young person of school age.



FIG. 2.—Products of the community's efforts.



FIG. 3.—Part of live-stock exhibit at a community fair.

The amusement and entertainment committee has charge of all athletics and field sports, games, folk dances; pageants, and parades, and also arranges for music, motion pictures, speakers, and other attractions.

The arrangements and decorations committee arranges for a place to hold the fair and looks after the decorations, using flowers, autumn leaves, evergreens, bunting, flags, and other available material. This committee cooperates with the several committees having charge of the different exhibit departments and assigns such tables, shelves, and wall space as are needed.

The publicity committee enlists the help of the local newspapers and supplies them regularly with articles concerning the fair and with a comprehensive report after it has been held. Regular notices are given in schools and churches and at all public gatherings for several weeks prior to the holding of the fair. Handmade posters are often used, and when well made they give individuality and attractiveness to the advertising. Printed handbills or "fliers" giving detailed lists of articles that may be exhibited in each department are distributed to every family in the community several weeks before the fair. In the preparation of these suggestive lists the publicity committee works with the chairmen of the committees having charge of the several exhibit departments of the fair.

EXHIBITS.

While it is to be expected that the exhibits at a community fair will receive special attention for the purpose of exhibition, never-

theless they should represent as nearly as possible the normal production of the community (see fig. 2), for one of the purposes of holding a community fair is to stimulate a desire to increase the quantity and to improve the quality of the average product. Freak exhibits of all kinds are to be avoided.

Personal solicitation has been found to be the most effective means of inducing people to make exhibits. Each exhibitor should realize that he is in competition only with other members of the community and that it will not be possible for some stranger to take all the prizes.

Satisfactory results are usually obtained in community fairs by grouping certain classes of exhibits. Thus, in the live-stock department, horses, cattle, swine, poultry, and pets are exhibited. (See figs. 3 and 4.) In the farm-products department are shown different varieties of grains and seeds, grasses and forage crops, field beans and peas, peanuts and potatoes, together with dairy products and bee products. The orchard and garden department includes such exhibits as fruits and vegetables, ornamental shrubbery, and flowers.

The woman's-work and fine-arts department includes prepared foods, canned goods, jellies, preserves, and pickles, and all kinds of needlework, together with such exhibits as paintings, metal work, raffia and reed basket work, pottery, painted china, and handmade jewelry. (See figs. 5 and 6.)

The school and club department includes all exhibits from organizations in the community which wish to bring the results of their work before the community in this way, as shown in figure 7.

The historical relics department includes firearms, swords, caps, and other war relics, old looms, spinning wheels, and articles pro-



FIG. 4.—Part of live-stock exhibit at a community fair.



FIG. 5.—Exhibit in women's work department.

duced on them, old pictures, drawings, documents, Indian relics, family relics, geological specimens, and objects of interest from other lands.

Besides the committees having charge of these departments, there are often others that conduct such activities as a better-babies contest, a health exhibit, or a parcel-post exhibit.

JUDGING.

Judges of ability and experience should be secured. The State agricultural colleges and other institutions are usually willing to render such assistance as their force of workers and means will permit. There are often other individuals with exceptional experience who may be available at little or no expense. When possible, judges should be chosen from outside the community.

The relatively small number of exhibits at a community fair makes it possible for the judges to explain the basis upon which the awards were made. Besides allaying criticism, this plan has great educational value. If standard score cards can be obtained from reliable sources, they should be put into the hands of prospective exhibitors several weeks prior to the fair, and all judging should be done on this basis.

PREMIUMS OR PRIZES.

It has often been found that community fairs do not appeal to certain persons who have been in the habit of making exhibits at fairs where cash premiums are awarded. The primary aim of an

exhibitor at a community fair, however, should not be to win a money prize as compensation for preparing his exhibit. Experience has proved that the awarding of money prizes not only makes the cost of a fair prohibitive, but, by placing the emphasis on money instead of on the honor of achievement, defeats the purpose of the fair.

The best results have been obtained where ribbons have been awarded, the color of the ribbon denoting the grade of the prize. If money is available for printing the ribbons, each one should be so printed as to show the occasion, place, and date. Awards should be made on the basis of the excellence of the exhibit, and no premium should be awarded to a poor exhibit. Accordingly, for the information of exhibitors, it is well to publish for each class of exhibits the requirements that are to be considered by the judges in awarding premiums.

There are numerous instances where valuable premiums have been given by commercial concerns for award to individuals or organizations that have been successful along the line in which the donors were particularly interested. In a middle Western State premiums were offered for the best-kept farm and home premises and to the farm and home showing the greatest improvement in a given time.



FIG. 6.—Household conveniences exhibited in women's work department.

EXPENSES.

The community fair does not require large sums of money for premiums or other expenses, and for this reason no charges are made for entry of exhibits or gate admissions. A small amount of money, however, is necessary to pay for printing and general advertising, lumber for tables, shelves, and live-stock pens, ribbons for premiums, and such decorative material and incidentals as are needed. This money is raised either by subscription or by selling advertising space in the premium list or fair catalogue.

The local county papers will usually be willing to publish a weekly article concerning the fair and to carry as an advertisement the suggested list of articles that may be exhibited in the different classes. The form used in printing this advertisement may also be used for printing the handbills or "fliers" which may be mailed or distributed at the schools or at some public meeting. Often decorative material, such as flags and bunting, may be borrowed from other organizations in the community, while the necessary lumber may sometimes be secured from the local lumber dealer with the understanding that only damaged lumber is to be paid for. It is sometimes necessary to hire labor in making preparation for the fair, but experience has shown that better results are secured where the people of the community do the work together.

RELATION TO COUNTY FAIRS.

The managements of county fairs are beginning to realize the value of the community exhibit as a factor in making the county fair serve its purpose as an agricultural exhibition. Liberal pre-

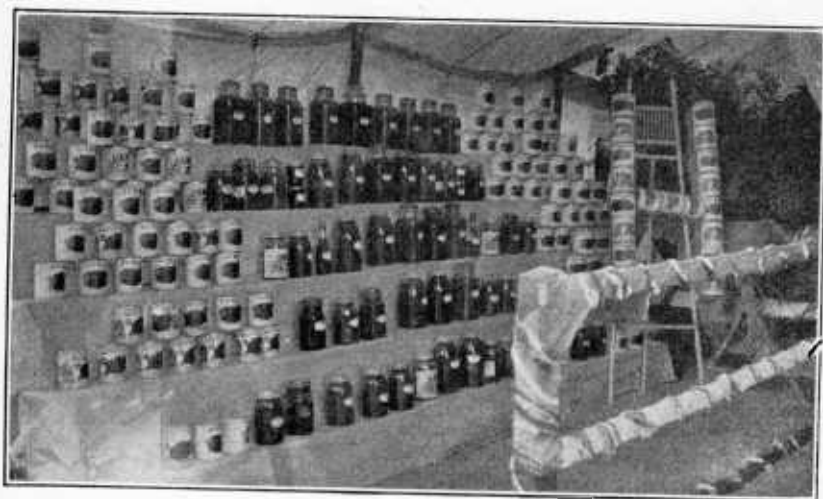


FIG. 7.—Exhibit of girls' canning club.

miums have been offered for these community exhibits, either in cash or in such form as to be of community use, as, for example, reference books on agricultural subjects to be kept in the community library, a watering trough conveniently located, or a drinking fountain.

One State has recently passed a law providing for the holding of community fairs and appropriating money for the purpose of packing community exhibits and transporting them to the larger fairs.

An interesting county fair, made up of 72 community exhibits, was recently held in a county in the Middle West. There were no races or sideshows. The 10,000 people in attendance spent their time for two days in visiting and inspecting the exhibits and in wholesome recreation under the supervision of an expert recreational director from a neighboring city. The exhibits, occupying in all about 15,000 square feet of floor space and 55,000 square feet of wall space, were housed in vacant buildings on the business street and in tents. Each community had its booths and the several communities vied with each other in making attractive exhibits of the products of the farm, home, and school.

**PUBLICATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE RELATING TO PUBLIC EXHIBITIONS.**

AVAILABLE FOR FREE DISTRIBUTION BY THE DEPARTMENT.

- Boys' Pig Club. (Farmers' Bulletin 506.)
Live-Stock Classification at County Fairs. (Farmers' Bulletin 822.)
Boys' Club Work. (Separate 667 from Year Book 1915.)
How the Whole Country Demonstrated. (Separate 672 from Year Book 1915.)
Effect of Home Demonstration Work on Community and County in the South.
(Separate 710 from Year Book 1915.)

**FOR SALE BY THE SUPERINTENDENT OF DOCUMENTS, GOVERNMENT PRINTING
OFFICE, WASHINGTON, D. C.**

- Demonstration Work on Southern Farms. (Farmers' Bulletin 422.) Price,
5 cents.
Correlating Agriculture with Public-School Subjects in Northern States. (De-
partment Bulletin 281.) Price, 10 cents.
Cooperative Agriculture Extension Work. (Department Circular 47.) Price,
5 cents.
Poultry Exhibit of the United States Department of Agriculture. (Bureau of
Animal Industry, Miscellaneous.) Price, 5 cents.
Poultry Club Work in the South. (Separate 669 from Year Book 1915.) Price,
5 cents.
Boys' Demonstration Work. The Corn Club. (Bureau of Plant Industry Docu-
ment 644.) Price, 5 cents.
Proceedings of the Seventeenth Annual Meeting of American Association of
Farmers' Institute Workers, Atlanta, Ga. (Office of Experiment Station
Bulletin 256.) Price, 10 cents.

